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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000667

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WHA/FO CMCMULLEN, WHA/BSC MDRUCKER, BFRIEDMAN, MDASCHBACH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2034/12/01
TAGS: PGOV PREL PA
SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S CHILDREN: RUMOR AND REALITY

REF: ASUNCION 229

CLASSIFIED BY: Perry Holloway, DCM; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: President Fernando Lugo refused to respond to new allegations that he has two additional children. His advisors and cabinet members refused comment, repeatedly citing the "private" nature of the issue. Colorado politicians and other Lugo detractors are attempting to use the paternity issue and charges of nepotism to weaken his power. The continued drip-drip-drip of new revelations continues to draw press attention and public criticism, but will likely soon blow over. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The latest revelations stem from Lugo's attendance at the November 21 wedding of Fatima del Rocio Rojas. The president's niece called several press conferences to announce that Rojas, now 22 years old, is actually Lugo's daughter by Teresita Rojas. The press also seized upon the presumed son-in-law's political appointment to a plum job at the Yacyreta Binational Entity in August 2009 as signs of nepotism. Independently, Representative Olga Ferriera de Lopez alleges she was contacted by a 23-year-old claiming to be pregnant with Lugo's child.

¶3. (U) Lugo accepted legal responsibility for a child for the first time in April 2009 (reftel.) Later in April 2009, Benigna Leguizamon demanded paternal recognition for her son Lucas Fernando, born September 9, 2002 when she was 20 years old. A paternity case is also pending for Juan Pablo, born December 5, 2007 to then 37-year-old Damiana Hortensia Moran, whose husband was working abroad in Spain when her son was conceived. Her lawyer called a press conference November 24 to exhibit the entry and exit stamps in his passports. Lugo has not recognized either child, but promised to abide by court rulings and submit to DNA tests if required. To date, Lugo has not taken a paternity test.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Lugo's paternity problems continue to grow, with women particularly appalled at what is revealing itself to be a lifelong pattern of behavior. As the rumors of even more children spread, Lugo's ability to maintain a grip on a weakened administration diminishes along with his already minimal influence over Congress. In addition, a Gallup poll released in mid-November shows Lugo's popularity has fallen to 25%. These newest allegations will continue to make him a lightning rod for press attention and public criticism, but will likely soon blow, unless more cases surface. END COMMENT.

AYALDE